

Back From Bloody Tarawa, "Seadog" Foreman, 23, Has Lively Stories to Unfold

By FLORRIE ANN RUEBUSH
Courier Staff Writer

"That ship of ours has horseshoes all over her!"
Thus accrediting his luck and survival in the bloody battle at Tarawa and 11 other major naval engagements, a fighting young seadog—23-year-old George W. Foreman, Jr., Monday was back home in Waterloo, a real veteran at 23.

Still bronzed from the blistering 130-degree heat at Tarawa, he said he had "just come off the greatest fighting ship in the United States navy" after having been aboard since Jan. 9, 1940.

The first Waterloo boy back from Tarawa, he is here spending a 30-day leave with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Foreman, 316 Vaughan street, and his wife's parents Mr. and Mrs. George M. Varco, 701 Logan avenue.

Shoe polish in one hand and a shine cloth in the other, he gave an extra vigorous swipe over the toe of his "best blacks" Monday as he said:

"We've got to starve those Japs or kill them—every last one of them. They're pretty rugged people—they even kill themselves before being taken prisoners."

He related how some Japs jumped overboard and how some spat in officers' faces after being taken captive and put aboard his ship at Tarawa.

Gives Marines Praise.

Although not permitted to discuss fully the bloodiest operation in marine corps history, Foreman, a boatswain's mate second class, described his part as a member of the attacking force and told how the marines waded shoulder-deep in the water in the face of withering Jap machinegun fire.

"We threw quite a few shells on the beach," he said, "while our marines volunteered for certain death to find Jap machinegun nests."

Back from the battle decks where he has served for three years, Foreman told Monday, too, how he and death often played a grim game of tag. The nearest he has yet come to "it," he said, came in the fierce battle at Komodorsky, on the Bering sea, near the Aleutian islands.

"We were ordered to rig ship for action," he recounted, "and immediately started firing. We were really going good. We fought off three heavy Jap cruisers, two light cruisers and six destroyers."

"Then suddenly, coming over the horizon, we sighted three more heavy cruisers and three destroyers. We were outnumbered."

"The captain said—'Boys, this is it.'"

"Men turned white and knelt beside their guns to pray. Others just muttered oaths as they kept on firing."

Head Right Into It.

"The captain ordered a smoke screen to be laid around us, and the Japs thought we were trying something new, so they quit firing. When the smoke screen cleared away, we headed right into them." Only two casualties resulted, he said, and those were from flying shrapnel fragments.

"It was the longest surface battle, for continuous firing, in United States naval history," he added. "And it sure was the longest three hours and 49 minutes of my life."

Although guns crackled, bombs hurtled and torpedoes sailed by, only several enemy blows struck home, he said.

Speaking like "a seafaring man from way back," who fights in the aggressive tradition of John Paul Jones, Foreman said his ship has been credited with sinking more ships than any other surface vessel in the history of the United States navy.

"In the south Pacific, no one disputes her claim as the original 'one-ship fleet.'"

"If all her Nipponese victims were laid out end to end, they would add up to a pretty tonnage," he said.

Wearing 11 stars on his campaign bars and expecting another star to be added soon for the battle at Tarawa, he also has the numeral 3 for his participation in the Asiatic-Pacific theater of war, one each for the north, central and south Pacific areas.

Entered in 1939.

Since leaving school while a senior at West high and enlisting in the navy on Oct. 3, 1939, the fortunes of war have carried him to remote corners of the world—New Zealand, Australia, Guam, Johnson and Baker islands, Midway, the Coral sea, Kiska, Port Moresby, Mare Island and Honolulu.

He has gone 162 days without putting his feet on ground. He has lived on gravy and rice for weeks. He has seen arms and legs and bodies floating in water.

But he says:

"I wouldn't take a million dollars for what I've gone through, and I wouldn't take another million dollars to go through it again."

He was 100 miles from Pearl Harbor when war was declared, saw the carrier Wasp go down and helped rescue 886 survivors who were placed aboard his ship. Likewise, he has seen the Enterprise, the Hornet and the Northampton in their final actions.

His ship, he said, has attacked the enemy at Wake, Wotje, Marcus, Guadalcanal and Savo islands.

"It has survived them all," he



GEORGE FOREMAN, JR.

said proudly, "and it's the oldest heavy cruiser in our navy." (It's identity is censored.)

Now itching to smack the Japs "another blow," Foreman is eager for an assignment to China—the one place he has missed. He says he would like to end up there next.

He has orders to report in mid-February at Bremerton, Wash., for re-assignment to an aircraft carrier.

One of three sons of Mr. and Mrs. Foreman now in service, George has a brother, Capt. Walter Foreman, stationed with an army medical unit in Louisiana, and another brother, James, a signalman striker with the navy in the south Pacific.

His wife, the former Evelyn Varco, whom he married last April, resides in Oakland, Cal. She accompanied her husband here on his leave.